

Fall Color Report – November 4, 2021



Northern Illinois

It took a while, but the fall colors are finally peaking in much of Illinois. In northeast Illinois, leaf watchers report the oaks are looking particularly good this week. Red oaks and northern pin oaks give rich reds, while white and bur oaks have a palate of warm browns. Hickories have mostly dropped their yellow leaves. Maples and sumacs are still sporting varying yellows, reds, crimsons and purples. The tamaracks at Volo Bog State Natural Area are about 60 percent golden and haven't started dropping needles yet.

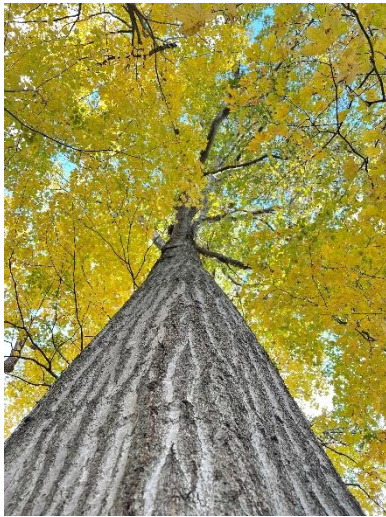


Weekend winds may make the show short-lived. Prairie grasses are beautiful this time of year as well, especially with dew and a low morning sun.

With frosts and freezes this week, we may see early defoliation prior to full fall coloration in much of the state, including northern Illinois.

The white and red oak groups continue to brighten up with reds, oranges and golds over green, offering a patchwork of color that stands out in passing. Hickories remain gold in color, which illuminates pockets within the forest, lending an air of bright cheer. Sugar and black maples remain constant with their bright reds and yellows. Red maples in many locations are coming on strong with pockets of deep to bright reds. Silver maples are cloaked in yellow, as are catalpas, mulberries, basswoods, aspens and hackberries. Depending on location and proximity to available light, hazelnuts are turning yellow to orange. Common witch hazel is yellowing up nicely, while blackhaw viburnum is turning shades of mild purple to red. Dogwoods are blushing reddish yellow.

Central Illinois



Fall color was coming on fast this week in the upper Illinois River Valley areas of central Illinois. Good to great color can be seen just about anywhere along the valley. Colors should be peaking over the next week or so. Maples have really turned, and oaks are in change.

There are numerous vines and shrubs along the roadsides that are in full color. This week's cold nights have leaves falling, making for magical trail walks through the leaf-sprinkled forest floors of our state parks, nature preserves, and wildlife areas. Now is the time to venture out for that drive or hike you have been thinking about.



The colors really took off this week in west central Illinois. Maples are at peak, but the freezing overnights mean leaves are dropping. Oaks are showing a lot of color, but many are still green. Sumacs are dropping leaves and are past peak. Hickories are outstanding this week with beautiful yellows and browns. Many walnut and cottonwood trees have dropped most of their leaves.



In east central Illinois, leaf watchers report the frosts and freezes have leaves falling. The sugar maples and hickories are still showing orange and yellow. The black oaks and red oaks are turning red to burnt orange and white oaks are burgundy to purple in many cases as we head into peak color in most of the region.

Southern Illinois

In southwest Illinois, foresters report they are seeing approaching peak color, especially along the Mississippi River bluffs. Oak foliage ranges from green to brown to red. Hickory trees are turning a bright golden at their peak. Understory trees such as dogwood and redbud are primarily hues of red, violet, and crimson. Hackberry, elm,

sycamore, and other more mesic tree species are representing a variety of yellows. Together, the forest is a brilliant mosaic of natural pastels and vibrant primary colors.



In southeast Illinois, colors are quite bright this week. In woods with hickory and maple trees, the entire woods will be sunset yellow, and the edges will have varying oranges and yellows of sassafras. Oaks are starting to change, and white oak leaves are a mix of red and green. Leaf drop has not yet accelerated in the canopy trees except walnuts, ash trees, and black gums. Sweet gum leaves are a neat mix of yellow, red, and purple.

Elsewhere in southern counties, leaves were changing quickly this week. Some views are 75 percent color with light green mixed in, with others more 50/50. Sugar maples are fantastic yellow with some orange color.

Hickories are striking yellow. White oaks are showing beautiful shades of burgundy red. Sumac and some sassafras are still striking red hues on the edges of woods.

If we avoid heavy rain and high winds, the next two weekends should be great for fall color drives and hikes in southern Illinois.